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ABSTRACT

This digest highlights the findings of an extensive review and analysis of the literature related to the role of libraries in education. The review was undertaken to demonstrate the critical role libraries can play in meeting the six National Education Goals adopted in 1990 by the President and the governors of the United States. The goals, which are to be accomplished by the year 2000, are as follows: (1) all children in America will start school ready to learn; (2) the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent; (3) American students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy; (4) U.S. students will be the first in the world in science and mathematics achievement; (5) every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and (6) every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning. A brief statement about each of the goals is provided, followed by highlights of two programs related to that goal. Four key publications, including the monograph on which this digest is based, are listed as references. (BBM)

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Libraries for the National Education Goals. ERIC Digest.

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Prepared by Mary Alice Brennan,
based on *Libraries for the National Education Goals*
by Barbara K. Stripling

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ERIC DIGEST

June 1992

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Libraries for the National Education Goals

This digest is based on **Libraries for the National Education Goals**, by Barbara K. Stripling.

By the year 2000, it is envisioned that our nation will have accomplished the six National Education Goals adopted in 1990 by the President and the governors of the United States. Since libraries are the only educational system available to everyone, regardless of age or affiliation, it is logical to turn to our nation's libraries to help to achieve these goals.

To demonstrate the critical role libraries can and do play in support of the national education initiatives, an extensive literature review and analysis was undertaken (Stripling, 1992). This digest highlights the findings of that review.

Goal One: By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.

Experts predict that fifty percent of a child's intellectual development occurs before the age of four. If this is true, then it is crucial that preschoolers receive high quality care. Both public and school libraries provide activities, services, and materials to facilitate early language acquisition and reading readiness in preschool children.

Highlights:

- The Pittsburgh Public Library's Beginning with Books project reached disadvantaged families in places around the community. They began by distributing packets to preschoolers in health clinic waiting rooms, and later expanded to social services centers, shelters, housing developments, and day care centers.
- The Foster Reading Center was set up by the Evanston (Illinois) Public Library and community leaders to provide reading/learning centers in the neighborhoods. Its Roving Reader Project sends readers to day care centers twice a week to share stories and enthusiasm for reading.

Goal Two: By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

School and public libraries are joining together to offer special programs for students who are most at risk of dropping out before graduation. In addition to literacy programs, libraries are offering programs that address self-esteem and ethnic pride, motivation, thinking and study skills, and development of interests.

Highlights:

- The Reuben McMillan Free Library Association (Youngstown, Ohio) conducts programs on ethnic heritage for at-risk and minority students. Programs have featured African-American writers, Hispanic crafts, and other topics. Students continue to visit the library after attending special programs.
- The Rantoul (Illinois) Public Library's at-risk program offers volunteer tutoring during students' study halls, educational seminars and workshops, field trips to businesses, and pre-employment experiences at local businesses.

Goal Three: By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.

With the quantity of information doubling every few years, students cannot be expected to memorize all the facts about a given subject. Instead, students must develop their ability to think and to learn independently. School libraries can be instrumental in teaching students how to find and process information using technology as a tool. By providing equitable access to information, libraries can help students to make responsible decisions and to become productive citizens.

Highlights:

- Research shows that students perform better on tests of research skills and comprehension skills when they have access to a good library media center and a professional library media specialist.
- In Hinsdale, Illinois, school and public libraries jointly published a student literary magazine. The program resulted in increased student self-confidence, improved reading skills, more creative and better organized thinking, and greater ability to express thoughts and feelings through writing.

Goal Four: By the year 2000, U.S. students will be the first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.

Libraries play a unique role in bridging the gaps between disciplines, and, more specifically, in helping students apply science and mathematics concepts to other disciplines. Science curricula can be enriched in library media centers by providing hands-on displays and learning centers, electronic databases that contain the latest scientific information, guest speakers and demonstrations, and displays of student-produced science projects.

Highlights:

- The Monroe County Public Library (Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania), has a science awareness program for children. Volunteers demonstrate natural and scientific phenomena at special presentations, and resources in science and technology are distributed to teachers.
- Students use the school library media center to access electronic bulletin boards and databases available on national networks. NASA Spacelink, for example, provides current information and teaching guides on topics about space.

Goal Five: By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

It is estimated that there are 23 million illiterate and 35 million semi-literate adults in America. Many of these people are removed from an established educational system, and for these people, the library is the only educational institution available. Libraries are responding by providing services and materials to help American citizens gain literacy and become lifelong learners. Library literacy programs frequently target such special audiences as young adults, disabled people, institutionalized people, and people with limited English proficiency.

Highlights:

- The Brooklyn Public Library operates five adult learning centers that feature tutoring and tutor training; computer-assisted learning; English as a Second Language classes; collections of high-interest, low-vocabulary books; reference books for literacy professionals; and study tables on citizenship, job-seeking, and other adult interests.
- The Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries (CARL) online catalog system is located in many libraries and is also accessible to learners at homes and schools by modem. In addition to library holdings, the system gives access to economic information, local databases, other computer networks, and electronic mail.

Goal Six: By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

Before learning can take place, students must feel intellectually, physically, and emotionally safe. Libraries provide intellectual and emotional safety for children by offering information and services that children can turn to when seeking answers to their concerns. Information about drug abuse and social violence is accessible in school libraries, and the library's safe environment allows students to work independently, thereby bolstering students' self-esteem. In the same way, public libraries provide community members with safe learning environments.

Highlights:

- The Geauga West Branch of the Geauga County Public Library (Chesterland, Ohio), has a latchkey program that provides youth programming and help with school assignments while functioning as a safe social interaction center.
- Project LEAD (Librarians and Educators Against Drugs) of the Summit (Illinois) Public Library promotes drug awareness among elementary students by hosting a community awareness day, distributing information, and arranging visits by anti-drug speakers to the schools.

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